



Father Louis de Seille.



The first resident missionary in northern Indiana, and the founder of the settlement known as Notre Dame was Father Louis de Seille, one of the most saintly priests ever sent to the American mission. He was a native of Belgium, and a descendent of one of the oldest and wealthiest families of that country. The old mansion in which he was born is still standing and is one of the most conspicuous in the neighborhood of Sleidinge. It is surrounded by stately trees, growing from nuts sent by Father de Seille from America. The little chapel where the future missionary used to retire to commune with God, and where he made the generous sacrifice of all that is nearest and dearest to the human heart for His love, is preserved. The hollowed spot was lately visited by a priest of our acquaintance who had also the happiness of spending some hours with the noble family which cherishes with affectionate piety the memory of its apostolic son. We are told that the beautiful garden adjoining the residence of de Seille, and neighboring villages, on account of its representation of the Grotto of Lourdes which it contains, was planned by Father de Seille himself.

The precise date when our missionary first came to Indiana is not known but the period of his ministry is placed between the years 1832 and 1837. His mission embraced a portion of three States—Indiana, Michigan and Illinois. A sick-call sixty or eighty miles away was a common occurrence in those days, when priests were few and far apart. Notre Dame, when Father de Seille came here, was a favorite camping-ground of the Pottawatomies a large and powerful tribe of which the last chiefs have long since passed away. The record of the short but fruitful years of de Seille's mi-